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Square Feet

Some of the Bright Lights of New York's Businesses Are Powered by Wind



ROBERT CAPLIN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

At Chelsea Piers, David Tewksbury, left, of its management company, and Jorge Lopez, chief of ConEdison Solutions, which offers renewable energy.

By JANE L. LEVERE

The use of wind power by owners of commercial real estate in New York City is rising rapidly, but from a very low base, according to energy service companies, which supply the power to businesses.

Wind power is expected to be a critical component of President Obama's plan to expand the production of renewable domestic energy, and there are signs that this is starting to happen in New York. ConEdison Solutions, one energy supplier, said its

sales of wind power to commercial customers rose 25 percent in 2007 and again in 2008.

Still, only about 250 businesses buy some measure of wind power from ConEdison Solutions. This number represents slightly over 1 percent of its commercial and industrial customers; of these, some 200 get all of their power from wind farms.

Jorge J. Lopez, chief executive of ConEdison Solutions, said that these buyers were "green pioneers" and that in honor of Earth Day, a ceremony this

week involving the City Council speaker, Christine C. Quinn, would honor about a dozen customers.

Commercial purchasers of wind power in New York vary widely in size. They include, for instance, John Masters Organics, a 2,000-square-foot hair salon and hair and skin care company in SoHo, and Chelsea Piers, the one-million-square-foot sports and entertainment complex on the Hudson River.

With few exceptions, commercial users of wind power in New York do not generate this power on site, but rather buy it

from companies like ConEdison Solutions and its competitors, including Accent Energy and Energetix.

In 1998, ConEdison Solutions, a unit of **Consolidated Edison**, began giving its residential customers the option of purchasing a combination of wind and hydro power; in 2002, it expanded this program to include commercial customers.

Today, commercial customers can choose to use 100 percent wind power, a combination of wind and standard power, or standard power. If they purchase wind, they can specify whether they want wind produced regionally (in New York and Pennsylvania) or nationally.

Nationally produced wind power is cheaper than power produced regionally. Wind power can cost 0.5 to 2.5 cents more a kilowatt hour than electricity generated by other means, which costs approximately 10 to 15 cents per kilowatt hour.

Once ConEdison Solutions buys power from wind farms, the farms deliver it to the electricity grid. That purchase of wind power is verified by an independently audited system.

Chelsea Piers converted to 100 percent wind power last October. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, that makes it the largest commercial user of 100 percent of wind power in New York City, though it uses only about a sixth of the power used by New York University, the largest 100 percent user of wind power in the state, according to the E.P.A.

David A. Tewksbury, executive vice president of Chelsea Piers Management, which runs the complex, said its annual power bill of \$3.8 million was projected to rise only \$100,000 annually as a result of the conversion.

Chelsea Piers is a huge building, with parts reaching out onto Pier 59 through Pier 62, west of the West Side Highway, from West 17th to West 22nd Streets.

Its major components are a golf facility, which has a 15,000-square-foot clubhouse and 200-yard driving range with four tiers of 52 heated stalls; two event spaces totaling 50,000 square feet; a 130,000-square-foot health club; an 80,000-square-foot skating rink; and an 80,000-square-foot gymnastics and sports club. The complex also has 260,000 square feet for fashion photography and film and TV production.

Chelsea Piers consumes some 22 million kilowatt hours of power a year. By comparison, the Empire State Building and its tenants use 60 million.

Still, ConEdison Solutions said Chelsea Piers' annual purchase of wind offsets 13,344 metric tons of electricity-related greenhouse gas emissions, the equivalent of taking 2,856 cars off the road, or planting 12,300 acres of trees.

"We run a healthy business, are socially aware of the planet and understand what our customers are like," Mr. Tewksbury said. "When oil was going for \$150 a barrel, it just became painfully obvious to us we couldn't be a fully oil-dependent company."

John Masters, founder of John Masters Organics, has been a 100 percent wind power customer of ConEdison Solutions since 2007, and publicizes this through a sign in his salon.

Barcade, a bar on Union Avenue in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, that specializes in craft beers and vintage video games, has been a 100 percent wind power customer of ConEdison Solutions since 2004. Paul Kermizian, a co-owner, said he and his partners had gone in this direction because "we have a big electricity footprint

with the video games, and felt we needed to be a little more responsible with our energy use."

Commercial customers of ConEdison Solutions that purchase a combination of wind and other types of power include Brooklyn Industries, a company that designs clothing for men and women and has nine stores in Manhattan and Brooklyn; O'Melveny & Myers, a multinational law firm that occupies nine floors of 7 Times Square; and the Durst Organization, a real estate developer. One-tenth of all power in Durst's 10 commercial buildings, covering 8.5 million square feet, is from wind.

Constantine E. Kontokosta, a professor at the Schack Institute of Real Estate at New York University with expertise in green building, called Chelsea Piers' wind power initiative "an important positive indication of the growing concern among commercial real estate companies of the environmental impact of the built environment." He noted, however, that wind power's higher cost could make it less attractive in the current economic climate.

Besides ConEdison Solutions' "green power" program, other wind initiatives under way or in the planning stages in New York City include lighting provided by rooftop wind turbines and wind and solar-powered streetlights, both unveiled this month at the Brooklyn Navy Yard, a 300-acre campus that is home of 240 small manufacturers.

On Monday, the Long Island Power Authority and Con Ed said they would be collaborating with state and New York City organizations on a possible off-shore wind farm off the Rockaway Peninsula in Queens, which could be the country's largest wind farm.